

# Investigations into the Meta-Communicative Lexicon of English

*A contribution  
to historical pragmatics*

EDITED BY

Ulrich Busse  
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John Benjamins Publishing Company

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## Preface and acknowledgements

Now that “the hurly-burly’s done” (*Macbeth* I, i, 3), i.e. that the last few corrections to the present volume have been implemented and the entire process of editing and getting the volume published are over, it is time for a few words on how this book came into being.

The idea for this project goes back to Axel Hübler. A look into our email correspondence shows that as far back as June 2007 he suggested a co-operation between the two of us on the topic of diachronic metapragmatics. Since our research interests in historical pragmatics and metapragmatics overlap, the idea of teaming up forces was close at hand, and so we developed the idea of hosting a small topical conference as a discussing platform and to publish a volume of papers afterwards.

By March 2008 things were definitely taking shape so that the next step could be initiated: looking for sponsors. We gratefully acknowledge the funding we received from the *Fritz Thyssen Stiftung* and from the Vice Chancellor’s Office of the *Friedrich Schiller University*, Jena, which made it possible to invite distinguished scholars in the field from all over Europe. The conference, entitled “From the Metacommunicative Lexicon to Historical Pragmatics”, took place in Jena in October 2008.

The phase from soliciting manuscripts to the publication of the present book was quite long, but eventually successful. We would like to thank Anita Fetzer, the series editor of *Pragmatics & beyond*, who encouraged us with our publication proposal. Our particular thanks go, of course, to the two anonymous reviewers, whose critical remarks meant a delay to the publication process, but whose expertise helped to improve the quality and the cohesion of the volume.

The various steps in honing the work to completion have taken longer than expected; we therefore thank the contributors for their patience and endurance. Last, but not least, our thanks go to Isja Conen and the whole production team of John Benjamins Publishing Company for their swift and efficient management of producing this book.

The collaborative effort of many people has thus turned our initial idea of publishing a volume of essays on metapragmatics into reality.

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# Introduction

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## 1. From a new vantage point

Over the past two decades, historical pragmatics has become a widely acknowledged and, in fact, even popular topic in historical linguistics, covering a wide array of topics and methodological approaches. The programmatic volumes edited by Jucker (1995) and, more recently, Fitzmaurice and Taavitsainen (2007) provide an outline of the scope and methodology applied in the discipline, and volume eight, entitled *Historical Pragmatics* (cf. Jucker and Taavitsainen 2010), of the nine-volume *Handbook of Pragmatics* is devoted to a state-of-the-art description of historical pragmatics. Thus, historical pragmatics has come of age as a discipline in historical linguistics. *The Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, which was established in 2000, further testifies to the liveliness of the discipline.

The present volume contributes an important chapter on historical metapragmatics, which has not yet received sufficient attention. More particularly, the papers which follow study metacommunication in historical text. Special emphasis is laid on lexis whose use in actual texts either directly or metaphorically identifies or characterizes entire forms of communication (genres), or single acts and act sequences, or minor units. Within the context of their use, such lexical expressions, in fact, provide a key for disclosing historical forms of communication. Taken out of context, these expressions build the metacommunicative lexicon.

## 2. The metacommunicative lexicon as a (meta) pragmatic research paradigm

We can regard vocabulary in general – to quote Fowler (1991: 82) – “as a representation of the world *for* a culture; the world as perceived according to the ideological needs of a culture”. The lexical unit originates in people’s abstracting from individual phenomena and treating them as tokens of the same type. The

metacommunicative lexicon in particular originates in people's becoming aware of what they do when they communicate and their desire to share details with other group members.

People's metapragmatic awareness, which – for communication purposes – eventually triggers the creation of adequate linguistic means of expressing it, manifests itself in various modes:<sup>1</sup>

- a. explicitly reflecting on what is going on in an actual communication (in a full or abbreviated form),
- b. abstracting from interacting and construing models of communication,
- c. transforming such awareness into corresponding communicative behavior.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the (a) and (b) modes, the (c) mode does not have any tangible element that could be considered metacommunicative.<sup>3</sup> It has no metacommunicative lexical correlate and is therefore not subject to further treatment. What we find instead are merely indicators that testify to a kind of self-monitoring activity, which constantly 'calibrates' (to use a Silversteinian term) the communicative intention with contextual and situational conditions. Pronominalizations and related processes, which "change their value depending on the actual event of speaking" (Lucy 1993: 10), represent one instantiation, contextualization cues such as code switching or choice among lexical and syntactic options another. These indicators, furthermore, do not show the semantic and structural characteristics of metacommunication: they are not attending *to*, but attending *from* speech – to use a neat distinction made by Anton (1998)<sup>4</sup> – and thus do not cause any break in the ongoing primary communicative process (cf. Hübler and Bublitz 2007: 7–8).

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1. For a comprehensive and systematic picture of the aspects involved and a survey of its manifestations, cf. Lucy (1993), Anton (1998) or Jaworski et al. (2004).

2. Studying the manifestations of these three modes of awareness results in the three sub-divisions of 'metapragmatics' as a linguistic discipline, tackled in detail in Hübler (2011). A fourth sub-division identified there, i.e. metapragmatics as metatheory of pragmatics, is of no relevance in the present context.

3. The two terms 'metapragmatic' and 'metacommunicative' are used, in this chapter, complementarily, the term 'metapragmatic' carrying theoretical, and the term 'metacommunicative' practical overtones. This distinction was not drawn in Hübler and Bublitz (2007).

4. "[W]e routinely and commonly attend not *to* speech, but simply *from* it. That is, when we listen to one another in our everyday encounters, we routinely listen *from* our speech *to* the thought so intended. Inversely, when a foreign tongue is used, a language we are unable to transcend, we explicitly attend *to* the speech. [...] Speech, then, is routinely an absent body, an intentional arc which disappears for the sake of the meaning so intended." (Anton 1998:199)



The (a) mode of expressing metapragmatic awareness, however, does certainly result in metacommunication discontinuous with ongoing primary communication.<sup>5</sup> Referring to particular speech events in an ongoing communication, they may topicalize specific aspects of it and add a metacommunicative function to it. For example, the utterance *This is not a complaint* topicalizes a possible illocutionary function of a preceding utterance (referred to by *this*), negates it and thus mitigates the criticism. Topicalizing a predication (*What do you mean by 'insinuate'?*) or a discourse organizational aspect (*And now I will reveal my next plans*) result in metacommunication open to a (meta-)pragmatic analysis. General aspects may be involved as well, effability and expressive appropriateness (*'Love' is just a word – I was virtually transfigured*), for instance, or general principles, norms and maxims such as *Just give us the gist of it – Come to the point, please! – Frankly speaking, I am fed up. – Not so loud! What will the others think?*

The verbal means deployed for this type of metacommunication differ in complexity. They range from full utterances (or even utterance sequences) with some lexeme(s) at their center that denote(s) a communicative concept (such as *complaint* or *insinuate* in the preceding examples) to simply adverbials (mostly style disjuncts like *briefly*, *sort of*, *frankly*) or conjuncts<sup>6</sup> with enumerative, summative, reformulatory, replacive or discourse-transitional functions (*first*, *second*, *in conclusion*, *in other words*, *alternatively*, *incidentally*).

There are certainly good reasons for classifying most of the lexemes deployed for such metacommunicative insertions as metacommunicative. But this is, in general, not their only function. A few adverbial groups are, however, exclusively metacommunicative, i.e. style disjuncts (*I was virtually transfigured*; *Frankly (speaking)*, *I am fed up*)<sup>7</sup>, as are certain conjunct groups, such as reformulatory or replacive conjuncts (*In other words*, *I don't like it*) and discourse-transitional conjuncts (*By the way*, *I feel thirsty*). Of the papers in the present volume, it is the one by Taavitsainen and Hiltunen on the metacommunicative disjunct *now* that covers exactly this type of metacommunication in historical texts.<sup>8</sup> Otherwise, there is virtually no autonomous lexicon of metacommunication.

5. Hübler and Bublitz (2007: 8–21) provide a detailed survey of the main forms of this sort of metacommunication and a systematics of the (meta)pragmatic functions as well as the frame conditions under which they work.

6. Conjuncts specify how an utterance fits into the surrounding discourse, “in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before” (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 227).

7. According to Quirk et al., style disjuncts convey “the speaker's comment on the style and form of what he is saying, defining in some way under what conditions he is speaking as the ‘authority’ for the utterance” (Quirk et al. 1985: 615).

8. For research on present-day conversational data along this line cf. Bublitz and Hübler (2007).

Generally speaking, full lexemes denoting forms of communication or aspects of it – our (b) mode from above – can merely function metacommunicatively. It is their use for metacommunicative purposes that turns them into metacommunicative expressions. The lexemes as such belong to the general lexicon, available for speaking/writing about the world in general, of which communicative events form part. Thus, the words *letter* and *answer* in Examples (1) and (2) belong to the field of communication, but it is only in (2) that they gain a metacommunicative value:

- (1) *I spent all morning writing letters, one to Annie and one to Sue and John – oh, and I answered a client's request.*
- (2) *Dear Annie, I sent you a letter three weeks ago which you have not answered yet. What's the matter? Anyway, ...*

Example (1) is a description of a world fragment in which letters as a means of communication play a role, but (2) is communication about ongoing communication by means of letters; the writer is complaining that (or at least wondering why) the addressee has not reacted yet to the first letter of three weeks ago.

In addition, the word *letter* has, of course, also non-communicative, physical readings. Nonetheless, it still makes sense to consider such lexemes that denote communicative concepts in general as metacommunicative. They are metacommunicative in that they store (and, when used, transmit) conceptualizations of communication processes (either holistically or partially); they are abstractions from interactions and conceptual construals, and thus testimonies of people's metapragmatic awareness.<sup>9</sup>

The two letter-writing examples above serve as evidence of a social meaning dimension of letter writing; the first example does so by drawing a dividing line between private and business letters, and the second example elucidates certain exchange conventions: a (private) letter has to be answered within a certain time-span, unless there are good reasons for not doing so. It is not, however, that the context of actual use adds the social meaning, but rather that the actual use brings to the fore the social meaning which the word has acquired in and through usage; the social meaning provides the *raison d'être* for the utterance to make sense. Lexemes of communication reify communicative practice (such as letter writing), which is a very economical way of preserving complex communicative practice (cf. Gergen 1994), including the social meaning beyond the mere denotational

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9. The existence and use of all these metacommunicative expressions testifies to a society's or a user's metacommunicative awareness oriented towards practical issues. It does not necessarily serve as proof of an awareness enabling one to explicate the metacommunicative meaning.

meaning.<sup>10</sup> The interactional meaning may tend to disappear, but re-surfaces in actual use.

The illustrations above imply that there are two axes involved in the complex meaning stored in (meta-)communicative lexemes, a horizontal and a vertical axis. From various theories about lexical fields we know that words associate with other words horizontally on the text-level in a collocational or syntagmatic relationship, and that they enter into competition with other words from the same lexical set on the vertical plane in a paradigmatic relationship.<sup>11</sup> To illustrate the point once again, the lexeme *discussion* can serve as an example: on the one hand, it is associated (in present-day usage) with at least one other person who discusses, with a 'hot' and possibly contentious topic, with rules of organization, and with the value 'interesting'. On the other hand, it competes with notions and corresponding lexemes such as *dispute*, or *chat*. In that respect, it is part of a lexical set.

Members of a set co-determine one another semantically. For example, the term *discussion* would have a wider semantic scope, if the set did not contain *dispute*. Sets can be taken as indicative of the social importance of the communicative aspect they cover; in this sense, then, the lexemes are metacommunicative expressions. The central criterion for assessing the metacommunicative significance is diversification. As a rule of thumb, we could say that the more diversified a set is, the higher is the social significance of the communicative aspect of its members.

This approach is pursued by **Simon-Vandenberg** and **Defour**, who examine verbs of asking, and by **Hübler**'s treatment of prosodic terms. The contribution by **Taavitsainen** and **Hiltunen** finds its methodological place here as well (even if the notion of set is reduced to just one member: the disjunct *now*). This approach is also chosen by **Kohnen**, who investigates whether directive speech act verbs are used performatively or non-performatively.<sup>12</sup>

For lexemes linked to one another by horizontal associations on the utterance level (the collocational, syntagmatic axis), Coseriu's (1967: 296) notion of 'lexical solidarities' can be deployed fruitfully. The notion can be described as the

10. Cf. the following definition: *A letter is a written message addressed to a person or an organization, usually put into an envelope and sent by post* (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 5th ed.1995).

11. Lipka uses 'set' "as a cover term for all paradigmatically related groups of words which cannot be described by purely linguistic methods" (1990: 158).

12. Kohnen's topic may appear a borderline case, though, in that it centers around the notorious question of whether the performative use of speech act verbs is to be considered metacommunicative, and if so in what sense. In other words, is the speech act formula (1st person singular present) of speech act verbs such as *promise* as in *I promise you to be on time* just an explicit performance of a promise, or is it simultaneously a (metacommunicative) comment on a performance that could have been achieved by simply saying *I'll be on time*?

determination of one word by a class of other words or a specific other lexeme. Solidarities are directed, oriented, unilateral implications. To give a neutral example first: the lexeme *kiss* shows a solidarity with *lips*, *kiss*, being the determined lexeme in that it contains the meaning of the determining lexeme *lips*, not vice versa. Applied to our field of interest, the lexeme *discussion*, for example, is determined, among others, by the lexical expression *hot topic*. On the other hand, the lexical expression *hot topic* is not determined by *discussion*, because it can also co-determine, say, *narrative*. From this it follows that the metacommunicative lexemes that are most determined by others are generic metacommunicative terms, which after all then amount to genre-terms.<sup>13</sup>

Genre terms can be said to contain cultural models of communication and interaction.

[T]hinking and using language is an *active* matter of *assembling* the situated meanings that you need for action in the world. This assembly is always relative to your socio-culturally defined experiences in the world and, *more or less*, routinized (“normed”) through cultural models and various social practices of the socio-cultural groups to which you belong. (Gee 1999: 49–50)

At the same time, they are models for communication and interaction. They are

used to perform a variety of different cognitive tasks. Sometimes these cultural models serve to set goals for action, sometimes to plan the attainment of said goals, sometimes to direct the actualization of these goals, sometimes to make sense of the actions and fathom the goals of others, and sometimes to produce verbalizations that may play parts in these projects as well [...].

(Quinn and Holland 1987: 6)

Analyzing metacommunicative genre-terms as to their metacommunicative lexical determinants reveals (aspects of) the communicative models they encapsulate. This is, to a greater or lesser degree of explicitness, the target that all the genre analyses in this volume pursue in a variety of ways. **Dossena** and **Fitzmaurice** tackle immigrant letters and letters of friendship respectively, **Verschueren** examines treatises, **Gotti** academic discourse, **Watts** chronicles, **Heyd** hoaxing and **Bublitz** e-chats and related forms of communication. Restricting their attention to metacommunicative lexical determinants is the feature that distinguishes their work from ordinary stylistic genre analyses.

13. This view coincides nicely with a theoretical position in (genre theory) that recognizes genre as “a discourse community’s nomenclature” (Swales 1990: 54). While Swales does not fully subscribe to this position, Hodge and Kress do: “genres only exist in so far as a social group declares and enforces the rules that constitute them” (Hodge and Kress 1988: 7). Conventional definitions of genres tend to be more ‘objective’ in that genres are understood as being based on fixed conventions of content (such as themes or settings) and/or form (including structure and style).

There is still another group of lexemes that deserves mentioning. These lexemes are tackled separately, because they show, in fact, features that separate them from the others, even though they are, no doubt, metacommunicative in that they have as their possible referents communicative behavior. Major examples are expressions such as *politeness* or *conversational maxims* (and their exponents such as *brevity* or *perspicuity*), which convey communicative qualities that are not inherent in communication and, yet, specifically communicative. Unlike metacommunicative lexemes proper, which synthesize internal aspects of communication, the expressions at issue now denote communicative qualities that are external to communication and merely superimposed on it. They are, more or less, of an ideological nature. Brock has chosen such expressions as the topic of his contribution. According to our (c) mode from above, such expressions transform the people's metapragmatic awareness into corresponding communicative behavior.

### 3. The significance of the metacommunicative lexicon for historical pragmatics

Historical pragmatics, just like pragmatics in general, is to a considerable degree interpretative, and thus subject to the hermeneutic problem of understanding otherness. More so than understanding contemporary communication, turning to historical forms of communication involves *fremdverstehen*; no matter how hard we try, the insights gained "are inevitably shaped by a present-day reading of the past" (Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice 2007: 14).

The risk that historical pragma-linguists run, however, is lessened in comparison to that faced by cultural historians in general, because linguists have as their pre-established subject of investigation what others first have to discover as a relatively reliable source, i.e. communication, and conversation analysis as a suitable instrument. The methodological discussions in disciplines such as ethnology and (cultural) anthropology provide good illustrations of the inherent difficulties or even dangers (cf. Geertz 1973 or Bourdieu and Wacquant 1996). As we read in Geertz:

Now, this proposition, that it is not in our interest to bleach human behavior of the very properties that interest us before we begin to examine it, has sometimes been escalated into a larger claim: namely, that as it is only those properties that interest us, we need not attend, save cursorily, to behavior at all. Culture is most effectively treated, the argument goes, purely as a symbolic system (the catch phrase is, "in its own terms"), by isolating its elements, specifying the internal relationships among those elements, and then characterizing the whole system in some general way – according to the core symbols around which it is organized, the underlying structures of which it is a surface expression, or the ideological principles upon which

it is based. Though a distinct improvement over “learned behavior” and “mental phenomena” notions of what culture is, and the source of some of the most powerful theoretical ideas in contemporary anthropology, this hermetical approach to things seems to me to run the danger (and increasingly to have been overtaken by it) of locking cultural analysis away from its proper object, the informal logic of actual life. There is little profit in extricating a concept from the defects of psychology only to plunge it immediately into those of schematicism.

Behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior – or, more precisely, social action – that cultural forms find articulation. (Geertz 1973:17)

Metacommunicative lexemes, we said, may encapsulate cultural models of communication rooted in particular practices of socio-culturally defined people. This holds true for ‘old’ expressions as well. If set in a definite historical context, such lexical expressions can therefore also provide access to historical forms of communication (and their underlying ideologies) and thus contribute to historical pragmatics. Unpacking past contextual meaning of metacommunicative lexemes, the programmatic aim of the present volume, comes close to what Geertz (1973) would call a ‘thick description.’ This holds particularly true for genre terms. While investigations into paradigmatic relations provide subtle and insightful details, genre terms are keywords, so to speak, in that they embrace and disclose integral and complex forms of communication.

*Keywords* is also the title of a classic study by Williams (1976), which may spring to mind; it investigates in how far keywords reflect ideas or ideologies of [Western/British] society in different periods.

When we [i.e. successive generations] come to say ‘we just don’t speak the same language’ we mean something more general: that we have different immediate values or different kinds of valuation, or that we are aware, often intangibly, of different formations and distributions of energy and interest. [...] I began to see this experience as a problem of *vocabulary*, in two senses: the available and developing meanings of known words [...]; and the explicit but as often implicit connections which people were making [...]. (Williams 1976: 9; 13)

Keywords relating to communicative practices, however, are not among those investigated by Williams.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly enough, neither has such a perspective so far played a major role as a research paradigm in linguistics, excepting the work by Wierzbicka (1997) or Critical Discourse Analysis (cf. Fairclough 1989 or Fowler 1991). Only metaphors seem to have stimulated research, particularly on metacommunicative expressions (cf. Simon-Vandenberg 1995, Kövecses 2005, or Semino 2006, to name but a few). An explicitly historical approach, however,

14. More or less the same can be said about Brunner, Conze and Kosellek (1972).

has been rarely chosen, with Geeraerts and Grondelaers (1995) and Arnovick (1999) among the few exceptions.

When we set metacommunicative lexemes (keywords or not) into a historical perspective, there is the option between two principled though interconnected objectives:

- a. to arrive at a description valid for a particular time in a specific genre (resulting in cross-sectional studies),
- b. to analyze the dynamic aspects involved, i.e. to identify changes in the meta-communicative vocabulary (in terms of neologisms, changes in meaning, or changes in preferences or in degree of application) across time (resulting in longitudinal studies).

All lines of research are represented in the genre analyses of the present collection of papers. The (a) option is chosen by **Dossena** and **Fitzmaurice**, the (b) option by **Bublitz**, **Heyd**, **Verschueren**, **Watts** and **Gotti**, all on genres. The (b) option is also chosen by the four studies on metacommunicative lexical sets, **Taavitsainen** and **Hiltunen**, **Kohnen**, **Simon-Vandenberg** and **Defour**; and **Hübler**, finally, outlines the development of lexemes denoting prosodic behavior from the 15th to the 20th century. As to the expressions of communicative ideologies, **Brock** also pursues a diachronic line (option b).

#### 4. Previewing the papers of this volume

Most papers in this collection go back to a small international conference co-organized by the two editors of this volume, and held at the *Friedrich Schiller University* in Jena, Germany, 2–4 October 2008; the contribution by **Taavitsainen** and **Hiltunen** was commissioned afterwards.

Together, the contributions to the volume cover a time span of more than a millennium, ranging from Old English to the immediate present. What unites them all is their focus on metacommunicative expressions. The papers apply qualitative as well as quantitative methods.<sup>15</sup> They cover all major distinctions introduced in Sections 2 and 3. Taken together, they show, though, an uneven distribution of the three lexicological differentiations drawn. The clear preponderance for genre-related studies may reflect simply a personal preference or a general

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15. As a matter of fact, the syntagmatic genre-centered studies are qualitative (including the paper on metacommunicative ideological notions), the paradigmatic studies quantitative, the paper by Taavitsainen and Hiltunen reflecting a yet preliminary stage.

trend, of course; but it may also be due to the fact that it provides a highly practicable way of keeping lexicological investigations more manageable.

We have grouped the articles according to the three principal distinctions previously drawn for the metacommunicative lexicon, subdividing the genre studies according to the two historical perspectives indicated above.

1. Metacommunicative profiles of communicative genres;
  - a. cross-sectional studies
  - b. longitudinal studies
2. Metacommunicative lexical sets
3. (Meta-) communicative ethics and ideologies

Within each group, the papers' order follows the course of time.

The first section on 'Metacommunicative profiles of communicative genres' starts with two historical cross-sectional studies. It opens with the contribution by **Fitzmaurice**. She focuses on eighteenth-century letters of friendship and examines how the writers recruit the lexicon of talk and talk in interaction (conversation) in order to characterize the pragmatic conduct of friendship.

In the early eighteenth century, the letter (in general) is regarded as the ideal medium of personal interaction, capable of approximating the conversation among intimates. Prominent in the metacommunicative lexicon of the period are terms like *conversation* and *talk* and discussion of how epistolary interaction assumes the ease and intimacy of conversation. These terms appear in correspondences conducted between male friends in the context of reflections on the nature and quality of the relationships performed in the act of conversation (via letter writing).

Friendship in this period is construed as a historically specific concept, governed by particular rhetorical conventions and pragmatic behavior. The goal of the paper is to locate the pragmatics of early eighteenth-century male friendship in the assumptions and beliefs about the meaning of conversation and in its performance in letters.

**Dossena** highlights the interactional features of letters by dealing with the sub-genre of emigrant letters written by 19th-century Scots to their relatives at home. The letters belong to the *Corpus of Nineteenth-century Scottish Correspondence*. As these letters were mostly written by people with only little formal schooling, they represent an ideal text type in which to investigate the coexistence of possibly diverging aims and norms. On the one hand, encoders wished to comply with standards of formality as codified in letter-writing manuals; on the other hand, and perhaps more importantly to them, they wished to convey their thoughts as authentically as possible, involving the recipients and signalling their psychological



proximity. Dossena's analysis of the use of metacommunicative vocabulary in these letters identifies ways in which participants attempted to convey or clarify the illocutionary force of their statements, while maintaining social relationships with geographically distant recipients by means of accurate facework based on positive and negative politeness moves.

The majority of genre papers, however, are longitudinal studies. Watts's contribution deals with a stylistic change from an impersonal to a personal style of chronicle writing at the beginning of the Middle English period as manifested in the *Peterborough Chronicle* after roughly the year 1070. Up to that point in time, the chronicle had been written in the formulaic style typical of the Anglo-Saxon chronicles in general. The entries concerning the reign of King Stephen (1135–54) show a marked change of authorial stance. The passionate personal indictment of Stephen's reign shows the gradual breakdown of the indigenous chronicle tradition in English through the increasing use of linguistic expressions of a metadiscursive and metapragmatic nature. We have here a move towards what Watts calls "inscribed orality", which continues in texts such as the *Orrmulum*, *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn* throughout the 13th century. The increase in the use of metapragmatic expressions cannot only be used to trace the breakdown of the Old English written standard but may also serve as a valuable window on oral communication during the transition period between what are (perhaps erroneously) called "Old" and "Middle" English.

Gotti notes that among the many developments taking place in 17th-century England, the evolution of a new type of 'academic discourse' played a fundamental role. This new type of discourse resulted from the great epistemological and methodological innovations in the science of that period, especially from the emphasis on experimental activity. This change of research paradigm also led to a change of communicative genres. The new approach made it necessary for both the procedures and the results of these experiments to be made known to the entire learned world, in contrast to the group of alchemists, who considered secrecy one of the main characteristics of their research method. Such a new goal required the adoption of appropriately innovative stylistic means.

Gotti's paper therefore surveys the characteristics of this new stylistic approach envisaged by the specialized discourse community of that time. In particular, the paper focuses on the features of a 'civil' style and illustrates its adoption by one of the most influential innovators of that period, i.e. Robert Boyle, for his *The Sceptical Chymist*.

Verschuieren's subject of investigation is treaties. He analyses the metacommunicative lexicon of the diplomacy of warfare on the basis of a book published in 1943 entitled *General Collection of the LAWS and CUSTOMS OF WAR on Land, on Sea and in the Air, according to the Treaties elaborated by the International*